

## CLAIMS

1        1. (previously presented) A portable device comprising:  
2              a microprocessor;  
3              a non-volatile memory coupled to the microprocessor; and  
4              a biometrics-based authentication module coupled to and controlled by the  
5              microprocessor, wherein access to the non-volatile memory is granted to a user provided that  
6              the biometrics-based authentication module authenticates the user's identity and wherein  
7              access to the non-volatile memory is denied to the user otherwise.

1        2. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 1 wherein the  
2              biometrics-based authentication module is a fingerprint authentication module.

1        3. (currently amended) The portable device as recited in Claim 1 further  
2              comprising a universal serial bus (USB) connector-plug for coupling the portable device  
3              directly to a USB socket of ~~with~~ another USB-compliant device.

1        4. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 1 wherein the  
2              biometrics-based authentication module comprises a biometrics sensor fitted on one surface  
3              of the portable device.

1        5. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 1 wherein the  
2              non-volatile memory comprises flash memory.

1        6. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 1 wherein the  
2              microprocessor is configured to provide a bypass mechanism for authentication upon a  
3              determination of authentication failure by the biometrics-based authentication module.

1        7. (previously presented) A portable device comprising:

2           a bus;  
3           a microprocessor coupled to the bus;  
4           a non-volatile memory coupled to the bus; and  
5           a biometrics-based authentication module coupled to the bus, wherein under the  
6 control of the microprocessor the biometrics-based authentication module is configured to (1)  
7 capture a first biometrics marker; (2) store the first biometrics marker in the non-volatile  
8 memory; (3) capture a second biometrics marker; and (4) determine whether the second  
9 biometrics marker can be authenticated against the first biometrics marker; and wherein the  
10 microprocessor is configured to disable access to the non-volatile memory upon a  
11 determination of authentication failure by the biometrics-based authentication module.

1           8.       (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 wherein the  
2 biometrics-based authentication module is a fingerprint authentication module.

1           9.       (currently amended) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 further  
2 comprising a universal serial bus (USB) device controller coupled to the bus and a USB  
3 ~~conneector~~-plug coupled to the bus, such that the portable device is capable of being coupled  
4 directly to a USB socket of and communicating with a host platform via the USB eonnecto  
5 r plug.

1           10.      (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 wherein the  
2 biometrics-based authentication module is structurally integrated with the portable device in a  
3 unitary construction and comprises a biometrics sensor being disposed on one surface of the  
4 portable device.

1           11.      (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 wherein the  
2 non-volatile memory comprises flash memory.

1           12. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 wherein the  
2 biometrics-based authentication module is further configured to encrypt the first biometrics  
3 marker before storing the first biometrics marker in the non-volatile memory.

1           13. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 wherein the  
2 microprocessor is configured to direct the biometrics-based authentication module to capture  
3 and store the first biometrics marker provided that no biometrics marker has been stored in  
4 the non-volatile memory.

1           14. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 wherein the  
2 microprocessor is configured to enable access to the non-volatile memory upon a  
3 determination of authentication success by the biometrics-based authentication module.

1           15. (cancelled)

1           16. (previously presented) The portable device as recited in Claim 7 wherein the  
2 microprocessor is configured to provide a bypass mechanism for authentication upon a  
3 determination of authentication failure by the biometrics-based authentication module.

1           17. (previously presented) A biometrics-based authentication method  
2 implemented using a portable device, the method comprising the steps of:  
3           (a) obtaining a first biometrics marker from a user with a biometrics sensor  
4 installed on the portable device;  
5           (b) retrieving a registered biometrics marker from a non-volatile memory of the  
6 portable device, the registered biometrics marker having been stored therein during a  
7 registration process;  
8           (c) comparing the first biometrics marker against the registered biometrics  
9 marker;

10                 (d)     denying the user access to the non-volatile memory provided that a match is  
11     not identified in said step (c); and  
12                 (e)     signaling an authentication success provided that a match is identified in said  
13     step (c).

1                 18.    (previously presented) The biometrics-based authentication method as recited  
2     in Claim 17 wherein the registered biometrics marker is a fingerprint.

1                 19.    (previously presented) The biometrics-based authentication method as recited  
2     in Claim 17 wherein the registered biometrics marker is stored in an encrypted format.

1                 20.    (previously presented) The biometrics-based authentication method as recited  
2     in Claim 17 wherein said step (d) comprises granting the user access to the non-volatile  
3     memory.

1                 21.    (cancelled).

1                 22.    (previously presented) The biometrics-based authentication method as recited  
2     in Claim 17 further comprising the step of providing the user with a bypass authentication  
3     procedure provided that a match is not identified in said step (c).

1                 23.    (previously presented) A unitary portable data storage device having  
2     biometrics capability which can be directly plugged into a universal serial bus (USB) socket  
3     of a host computer, the device comprising:

4                 a housing;  
5                 a fingerprint module, at least a portion of which is housed within the housing, the  
6     fingerprint module including a sensor disposed on an exterior surface of the housing;

7           a memory including non-volatile memory, the memory housed within the housing and  
8       coupled to the fingerprint module and is configured to store at least one fingerprint template  
9       as well as user data;

10          a memory controller housed within the housing and coupled to the memory, the  
11       memory controller controlling access to the memory;

12          a USB plug integrated into the housing without an intervening cable and capable of  
13       coupling the unitary portable data storage device directly to a USB socket on a host  
14       computer; and

15          a USB device controller housed within the housing, the USB device controller  
16       enabling the unitary portable data storage device to communicate with the host computer via  
17       the USB protocol;

18          wherein the fingerprint module is configured to (1) receive a fingerprint sample from  
19       a user placing a finger on the sensor; (2) compare the fingerprint sample with said at least one  
20       fingerprint template; and (3) reject a request from the user to access the user data stored in the  
21       memory provided that the comparison in said step (2) results in no match.

1           24. (previously presented) The unitary portable data storage device as recited in  
2       Claim 23 wherein at least a portion of the USB plug protrudes from the housing to facilitate  
3       direct coupling of the unitary portable data storage device to the USB socket of a computer.